

CHAPTER EIGHT

“AS LONG AS I UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMERS,
I WILL ANSWER THEM”:

THE TRANSLINGUAL TUCKSHOP
VS. THE PLURALISED MONOLINGUAL
SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION
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1. Introduction

The quotation in the title of this chapter is extracted from an interview with a tuckshop owner who remarked that the language customers speak during economic transactions is insignificant - as long as she understands the customer, she will respond accordingly. The tuckshop owner's fluid approach to language is in contrast to the South African Constitution's approach to language. The South African Constitution stipulates that the country has 11 official languages. The official languages are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu.

Makoni (2003) and Phaswana (2003) have noted the South African government's failure to implement the national language policy specifically with regard to the increased use of the nine indigenous languages. Makoni (2003) argues that by dividing the indigenous languages into nine separate categories, the South African government perpetuates the misinvention of African languages by missionaries and colonial administrators, and the South African Constitution merely advances plural monolingualism, i.e. prompting citizens to only be efficient in their mother tongue. According to

Makoni (2003:135), missionaries “invented different languages out of one language through a process marred by 'faulty transcriptions and mishearings' mediated through partial competence in African languages”.

Makoni (2003:138) states that in the South African Constitution, the country's landscape is wrongfully portrayed as one that is “composed of many language boxes and linguistic ‘things’ separate and distinct”. Essentially, the South African government inherited and institutionalised a colonial epistemological perspective of language - a perspective that considers languages, and subsequently, people, as fixed entities that can be neatly separated and categorised. However, this portrayal is not an accurate representation of the South African socio-linguistic reality, nor of speakers' actual linguistic practices.

Tuckshops are an unmissable feature of the South African landscape, especially in the townships. Tuckshops (also known as spaza shops)

became popular in South Africa around the 1980s (Moloi 2014). Ligthelm (2005:202) defines spaza or tuckshop as “a business operating in a section of an occupied residential home or in any other structure on a stand in a formal or informal township for residential purposes and where people live permanently”. Tuckshops were dubbed by Terblanche (1991) as South Africa's first black-owned retailing institution and positioned them as a means of survival for the impoverished, unemployed black South Africans.

Decades later and the ‘face’ and core purpose of tuckshops have dramatically changed—from South African to international; from survivalist to entrepreneurial. As attested by Charman, Petersen and Piper (2012: 48), “since about 2005, a growing class of entrepreneur retailer has emerged as a major economic player within spaza markets. These entrepreneurs, characterised by ‘opportunity-motivated’ individuals, have steadily outcompeted many survivalist businesses”. According to Charman et al. (2012:48), “the majority of these opportunity-motivated entrepreneurs are immigrants, and the ensuing consequences of their rising dominance has a distinct national or ethnic character”. These opportunity-motivated entrepreneurs originate from various countries, including Somalia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Charman et al. 2012: 48).

Makalela (2017:112) explains that “the first port of entry for both local rural migrants and immigrants from countries outside of South Africa has always been the Black township”. According to Makalela (2017:112), this “necessary unprecedented immigration expanded the traditional bases of Black townships and typically, a Black township is now a site of linguistic contact between linguistic communities that were separated from one another during the apartheid era”. The transformation from being a static entity to a flexible institution—the transfiguration from being a black ‘South African’ survival strategy to a multipurpose international, pluricultural and multilingual institution—positions the tuckshop's semiotic landscape as one of the ideal socio-linguistic situations from which to explore current day South African linguistic practices—written and spoken.

This chapter aims to explore the extent to which a multicultural and multinational institution such as the tuckshop and its de facto linguistic landscape language policy challenges the notion of languages as neatly boxed objects, as depicted by the South African national language policy. This paper argues that, as an institution motivated by the harsh economic pre-apartheid era and which continues to exist in democratic South Africa, the tuckshop is a transformative translanguaging space that transcends arbitrary linguistic and national/ethnic barriers. This research is of an ethnographic nature as it includes interviews with tuckshop owners and customers about their linguistic practices and therefore it contributes to what

Makalela(2017:112) calls a“paucity of research on hybrid language forms as well as on the points of view of the speakers in complex multilingual contexts”.

2.A de facto translanguaging South African language policy?

This chapter draws on the conceptual work of Shohamy(2006)and Spolsky (2004)on language policy and translanguaging(Garcia and Wei 2014)to illustrate how the tuckshop's semiotic landscape is a translanguaging space (Wei2011). This translanguaging space serves as a de facto language policy that undercuts the official national language policy as declared in the South African Constitution, and problematises the conceptualisation of language in the Constitution.

Shohamy(2006:46)defines language policy as“specific documents, laws,regulations or policy documents that specify certain language behaviours”.Shohamy(2006) provides the distinction between two types of language policies: explicit and implicit.According to Shohamy(2006:50), explicit language policies are stated through“official documents, such as national laws,declarations that accord certain languages official or national status, language standards, curricula, tests and other types of documents”. In contrast, implicit/de facto language policies are “not stated explicitly but can be derived implicitly from examining a variety of de facto practices”. Shohamy's (2006)distinction between explicit and implicit language policies is similar to that of Schiffman(1996) who distinguishes between overt and covert language policies. The linguistic practices by tuckshop owners and customers discussed in this chapter are examples of a de facto language policy that 'governs' spaces such as the tuckshop.

Spolsky(2004:5)contends that the language policy of a speech community consists of three components:

- 1) its language practices - the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire;
- 2) its language beliefs/ideology -the beliefs about language and language use;
- 3) language planning or management which are any specific efforts to modify or influence linguistic practices.

Shohamy(2006:54)calls for an expanded view of language policy, arguing that the study of it“should not be limited to the examination of declared and official statements but should include analysing the mechanisms that produce, perpetuate and even challenge existing written policies”.Shohamy(2006:52) justifies this call by arguing that“most multilingual declared policies do not always reflect the de facto and'real'

language policies as declared policies provide only lip service, declarations and intentions"

In order to uncover and understand 'real' language policies, it is necessary to go beyond language policy documents and examine the mechanisms that create de facto language policies. According to Shohamy (2006:54), mechanisms can be defined as "overt and covert devices that are used as the means for affecting, creating and perpetuating de facto language practices". Shohamy (2006:110) lists language in the public space (linguistic landscape) as one of these de facto language policy devices and stipulates that it refers to "all language items that are displayed in a variety of contexts in the environment". In this paper, the language (written and spoken) in the tuckshop environment is considered an overt device that creates and perpetuates de facto language practices that challenge the existing written national language policy.

Jaspers (2017:2) notes that the concept of translanguaging was first coined in Welsh, as *trawsieithu*, and originally it referred to a pedagogy that encouraged the use of two languages. The initial translation of *trawsieithu* to translanguaging was done by Colin Baker and defined as "the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages" (cited in Garcia and Wei 2014:20).

Bradley and Moore (2018) note that translanguaging joins a group of similar notions that challenge the traditional understanding of languages as monolithic constructs. Examples of such notions include polylinguaging (Jorgensen 2008), plurilingual practices (Ludi and Py 2009), metrolingualism (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010), and codemeshing (Canagarajah 2011). However, for Garcia and Wei (2014:21), translanguaging "does not just refer to two separate languages nor to a synthesis of different language practices or to a hybrid mixture". Otheguy, Garcia and Reid (2015:297) assert that "translanguaging is the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages". Garcia and Wei (2014:21) add that translanguaging is "the enaction of languaging practices that use different features that had previously moved independently constrained by different histories but that are now experienced against each other in speakers' interactions as one new whole".

Translanguaging, as a catalyst in the deconstruction of the named languages boundaries, is important for this paper as tuckshops are spaces where individuals with different histories meet and interact. Due to its non binary nature, Garcia

and Wei(2014) consider translanguaging as transformative. As a transformative practice, translanguaging refers to “new language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories, and releases histories and understandings that had been buried within fixed language identities constrained by nation-states”(Garcia and Wei 2014:21).

Considering that translanguaging was initially conceptualised as a teaching method, it comes as no surprise that most of the scholarly attention related to translanguaging focuses on the education environment. Due to its expansion beyond the classroom, Lewis, Jones and Baker(2012) distinguished between three types of translanguaging-related research: (1) Classroom translanguaging; (2) Universal translanguaging; and (3) Neurolinguistic translanguaging. Universal translanguaging is described as a translanguaging search that “explores the lives of bilinguals irrespective of context and particularly for gaining understandings, everyday communication, and achievement in interactions irrespective of site”(Lewis et al. 2012:650).

The work in this chapter can be classified as universal translanguaging; however, the participants are not categorically bilingual- rather, they are social actors who draw creatively on their linguistic repertoire. Makalela (2013:114) notes that “there is a dearth of research that investigates translanguaging outside of the classroom to assess the cognitive and social dimensions of multilingual speakers”. This view is shared by Lewis et al. (2012:653) who suggest that future research avenues for universal translanguaging should include thinking about “how do we depict everyday translanguaging that occurs in thinking, interpersonal negotiations, understanding of meaning and is situated within changing scenery, coactors, audience, expected lines of a play, and a moving and not static storyline?”

This chapter responds to this need by exploring how translanguaging is drawn on in socio-economic relations and how it is operationalised on commercial signage and in conversations for meaning-making purposes.

2.1 Translanguaging space

Wei(2011) proposes the notion of translanguaging space to emphasise the transformative nature of translanguaging. Wei(2011:1223) argues that translanguaging “creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity”. Consequently, a translanguaging space performs a dual role: it is “a space for the act of translanguaging as well as a space created through translanguaging”(Wei 2011:1223). Wei(2011:

1223) adds that a translanguaging space “is not a space where different identities, values and practices simply co-exist, but combine together to generate new identities, values and practices”.

Translanguaging space, as a notion, hinges on two central concepts: creativity and criticality. According to Wei(2011:1223), “creativity can be defined as the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour, including the use of language”. It is about pushing and breaking the boundaries between the old and the new, the conventional and the original, and the acceptable and the challenging. Criticality refers to “the ability to use available evidence appropriately ... to inform considered views, to question and problematize received wisdom”(Wei 2011:1224). Wei(2011:1224) contends that these two concepts are interdependent: “one cannot push or break boundaries without being critical; and the best expression of one's criticality is one's creativity”.

2.2 Translanguaging and multimodality

Wei(2011:1223) states that translanguaging is going both between and beyond different linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering). Garcia and Wei(2014) comment on the progression of the notion of translanguaging following its inception and voice their particular conceptualisation of the term. Garcia and Wei(2014: 28) state that considering the increasingly multimodal nature of communication, their notion of translanguaging “includes all meaning-making modes”. Focusing on street puppetry performers in Slovenia and spoken word poets in the UK, Bradley and Moore(2018) apply the notion of resemiotisation in conjunction with translanguaging to understand how semiotic transformations emerge with and beyond linguistic practices. Using data from a Bangladeshi-owned corner shop, Pennycook(2017:270) explores the possibility of the expansion of translanguaging beyond just language codes to include a broader set of semiotic resources. Pennycook(2017:270) draws a comparison between linguistic landscape research and translanguaging research, and argues that similar to linguistic landscape studies, “so translanguaging research can also benefit from questioning not only the boundaries between languages, but also the boundaries between different modes of semiosis”.

Pennycook's (2017) suggestion of the expansion of translanguaging's scope emphasises the need to analyse how the various semiotic resources complement each other in a given space to enhance meaning-making. As argued by Pennycook(2017:270-271), “we cannot merely add more semiotic items to our translanguistic inventories, but need instead to seek

out a way of grasping the relationships among a range of forms of semiosis”.

Pennycook(2017:278) suggests the notion of assemblages to describe how “a range of linguistic,artefactual, historical and spatial resources are brought together in particular assemblages in particular moments of time and space”.Pennycook(2017:278) puts forth that“an understanding of semiotic assemblages gives us a way to address the complexity of things that come together in the vibrant, changeable exchanges of everyday urban life”.

The recent expansion of the scope of translanguaging,i.e. the incorporation of additional modes and its consideration as a catalyst in the invention of space, Wei(2011) positions this framework as an applicable lens through which to analyse the multimodal tuckshop landscape.

3. The study

This study forms part of a larger ethnographic study conducted in two district municipalities in the Northern Cape, South Africa, from December 2015 to July 2017. The data herein results from a combination of two types of ethnographies: visual ethnography(Pink 2007)and material ethnography (Stroud and Mpendukana 2009).Androutsopoulos (2014: 86) states that “photographic documentation lies at the heart of linguistic landscape data collection and basic hardware requirements such as a digital camera will prove adequate for photographic documentation”. A digital camera was used to take photographs of the material that form part of the landscape of the given environments. The photographic material,for the larger ethnographic study and this chapter, includes more than 500 images and 70 one-on-one interviews with local people recorded on a digital audio recorder.

Interviews were conducted with tuckshop owners and customers and two types of interview strategies were used:semi-structured interviews and walking-talking interviews (Banda, Jimaima and Mokwena 2018; Brown and Durrheim 2009; Stroud and Jegels 2014). The tuckshop is essentially a mobile space both inside and outside (there is a constant influx of customers into and around the tuckshop and typically owners constantly move back and forth to fetch purchased products). Consequently, walk-talk interviews were more practical and efficient in comparison to sedentary interviews. The researcher would initiate a conversation with tuckshop customers before or after they complete their purchases and walk with them while conducting the interview.

During transcription, most of the interviews were translated into English; however, the interviews were conducted in either Setswana, Afrikaans or

English, or in certain cases, a translingual blend of these languages was used.

Examples of translingual interview questions are: “O itse di tuckshop tse feng mo plekeng e?” (Translation: “Which tuckshops do you know in this area?”) and “lo dirisa taal e feng ha lo bua le die man?” (Translation: “Which language do you speak when you speak to this man [the tuckshop owner]?”) Both questions are a blend of Afrikaans and Setswana.

3.1 Is Setswana only meant for Batswana?

Makoni (2003) argues that the stance on languages and ethnicity in the South African Constitution is based on 18th-century German Romanticist views which considered language and identity as inseparable. According to German Romanticism, language was the most significant indicator of identity- which explains the current-day assumption in South Africa that, for instance, Xhosa speakers automatically are affiliated with the Xhosa ethnicity. This link between language and identity, specifically ethnicity, is questioned by the written linguistic practices on tuckshop commercial signage.

Figures 8.1 and 8.2 serve as examples of how non-South African tuckshop owners dismantle the assumed link between language and ethnicity. The names of the tuckshops, i.e. ‘Dumelang’ and ‘Gagona Mathata’, form part of typical Setswana greeting practices. First, the word ‘Dumelang’ is used when one greets a group of people simultaneously. ‘Ga gona mathata’ means ‘There are no problems’, and is typically the response after one asks “O kae?” (“How are you?”) after one says “Dumelang”. Although the linguistic inscriptions in Figures 8.1 and 8.2 are in Setswana, the owners are non-South African citizens.

Whether one permanently migrates to or just visits another country/city, one is bound to quickly learn how locals in the area greet each other. In Figures 8.1 and 8.2, the non-Setswana speakers and non-South African tuckshop owners are drawing on their basic Tswana skills and have repurposed local ways of greeting as tuckshop names. The repurposing of local greetings as tuckshop names exemplifies what Pennycook (2006) describes as transcultural flows which are “the ways in which cultural forms move, change and are reused to fashion new identities in diverse contexts”.

Deumert and Mabandla (2013) explored Chinese traders' migration to the rural Eastern Cape, South Africa, with particular interest in language learning and intergroup communication between migrants and the local population. According to Deumert and Mabandla (2013:45), one strategy used by Chinese traders is the creation of signage which draws on local meanings. Figures 8.1 and 8.2 above serve as testimony that non-South African tuckshop owners use a similar strategy to locate themselves within

the “realm of familiarity” (Deumert and Mabandla 2013: 49). However, I contend that, although the tuckshop owners are positioning themselves in the realm of familiarity, they are simultaneously defamiliarising South African customers with something overly familiar to them. By using a language on the commercial signage that does not ‘match’ the identity of the owner, the familiar becomes unfamiliar, thereby coercing customers to create an alternative discourse about named languages and their supposed link to identity. Additionally, the non-South African tuckshop owners thus repurpose Setswana as a named language to eliminate the social distance between the South African clientele and non-South African tuckshop owners.

The following extract from an interview with a group of tuckshop customers illustrates the assumed link between language and identity:

Extract 1

Interviewer: Now which language do you speak to the owners at the white tuckshop?

Group: Afrikaans and English.

I: Do you not speak Setswana?

G: No. We do not know Setswana. They [tuckshop owners] use a little bit of Setswana when they speak to us.

I: So they do not speak any other languages with you?

G: They are not ‘Koelies’ [‘Coolies’]. I: What is that?

G: They are like us.

[Interjection from one of the group members]

G: Hey, those are ‘Koelies’ [‘Coolies’]. I: What is the name of the person you are referring to?

G: Kgomotso.?

I: So what is Kgomotso not?

G: Kgomotso is not a ‘Koelie’ [‘Coolie’].

I: Is he Muslim?

[Clarity from another group member]

G: No. She is trying to say that Kgomotso is like us. Brown people.

I: Tswanas, Zulus or Xhosa? Which people?

G: Tswana, it appears to me.

The interview with the group of tuckshop customers started out plainly with the interviewer asking the standard interview questions related to language use during economic transactions at tuckshops and the tuckshops’ commercial signage. As can be seen, the interview took a different turn following the interviewer’s probing about the use of any additional languages that tuckshop owners use with them as customers. The interviewees continue to suggest it is improbable that the tuckshop owner who they are familiar with, Kgomotso, would speak to them in any other language as he is not a ‘koelie’.? Interesting to note is that although the

participants provided no clear description of what a 'koelie' is, a 'koelie' is suggested to be anyone foreign-anyone who is not like 'us'. Kgomotso is categorised as being Tswana and is one of them based on the named languages he speaks: he speaks Afrikaans and English and even a bit of Setswana to them.

However, Kgomotso's self-reported linguistic repertoire and identity is inconsistent with that of the group of interviewees categorising of him as Tswana:

Extract 2

Interviewer: Which languages do you speak to your customers?

Kgomotso: I speak Amharic. No, no, I speak Afrikaans.

Interviewer: But you originally speak Amharic?

Kgomotso: No, I speak Afrikaans.

Interviewer: Do you only speak Afrikaans to them? Kgomotso: Yes, I don't understand Tswana. I am still learning. They are still teaching me.

Interviewer: So, what is Amharic?

Kgomotso: It is the other language that I know and speak.

As is apparent from Extract 2, the fixed categorisation by the group of interviewees of Kgomotso is partially skewed—primarily due to the faulty, outdated and Eurocentric link between identity and language. Kgomotso portrays himself as an individual with a fluid and expanding linguistic profile - a profile he does not relate to any identity, nor does he consider any of the named languages to grant and/or deny him outsider or insider status.

The fixed, 'language = ethnicity' manner of thinking is evident in Extract 1, which illustrates why the named languages used in commercial signage and the identities of the owners of the tuckshops, pictured in Figures 8.1 and 8.2, can be considered a 'mismatch' (for lack of a better word). However, these 'mismatches' and Extract 2 transgress South African societal assumptions and bring into disrepute the segregationist thinking perpetuated by the South African national language policy. Jokweni (2002: 177) argues that "the notorious laws which disintegrated people into ethnic groups during the apartheid era in South Africa were in actual fact borne out of the fear of unity or integration of any form among Africans, as it was always perceived as a threat to white 'supremacy'". The disassociation between ethnicity and language use in Figures 8.1 and 8.2, and Kgomotso's account of his fluid linguistic identity, can be viewed as a way of Africans continuing to problematise colonialism and apartheid ideologies that continue to influence socio-linguistic practices in democratic South Africa.

3.2 Translanguaging as a new linguistic dispensation

In addition to the non-binary written commercial signage that dismantles the assumption that language is an irrefutable social indicator of ethnic/racial identity, spoken linguistic practices further exemplify that tuckshop owners and customers do not adhere to the stark distinction between named languages. Orality forms part of translanguaging as a practice, as stipulated by Garcia and Wei(2014).

Spolsky(2004)distinguishes between three components that construct the language policy of a given speech community: language practices, language beliefs and language intervention/management. However, Spolsky(2004:8)cautions that“even where there is a formal, written language policy, its effect on language practices is neither guaranteed nor consistent”.

The disagreement between an overt written policy and language practices is evident in the semiotic landscapes of tuckshops. Irrespective of South Africa's national policy, which projects languages as 11 boxed and static entities, the translingual language practices between tuckshop owners and customers challenge the language policy. Table 8.1 illustrates this phenomenon. The third column shows the interview responses from some of the tuckshop owners when asked which language(s) they use with their customers.

As can be observed from the table above, when it comes to economic transactions, multilingual skills are more valuable than the tuckshop owners' mono-ethnic affiliations.

Aronin and Singleton (2008) argue that, in comparison with historical multilingualism, current-day multilingualism can be considered as a new dispensation. Although it is commonly known that multilingualism is not a new social phenomenon, Aronin and Singleton (2008) argue that there is something distinct about the current version in comparison with the 'historical' one. According to Aronin and Singleton (2008:8-9),“vital societal processes and salient characteristics of contemporary society are inseparably linked with multilingualism whereas 'historical' multilingualism was largely supplementary to the development and maintenance of previous societies”.In the Northern Cape, the tuckshop is one of those vital societal processes that are inseparably connected to multilingualism or rather, in this case, translanguaging. Understanding that the face of the tuckshop industry has changed dramatically in recent times with an increase in non-South African owners, economic transactions and general interaction among tuckshop owners and customers now hinge on translanguaging, not only as

a practice but also as the new linguistic dispensation. This view is shared by Deumert and Mabandla(2009:427),who observe that “the informal economy, with its various entrepreneurial activities, operates largely through the city's local languages - socially and economically dominant languages”.

Although the majority of tuckshop owners and customers all report using a blend of Setswana, Afrikaans and English during general interaction and/or economic transactions, it is noticeable that there is no standard way to blend these languages. Social actors blend and use these languages in accordance with their idiolects.

Below are extracts from interviews with tuckshop owners that exemplify the centrality of translanguaging in tuckshops and modern-day South Africa

Extract 3

Interviewer:Which language do you normally use?

Participant:In this place, it is mixed-Afrikaans, Tswana and English.

I:Okay, what is the first language you spoke when you came to this place? With your customers?

P:English. But when they are speaking their own languages, their mother languages,then I am trying to understand what they are saying. Like now I understand Afrikaans but I can't speak it properly.

I: But when they come in, you assist them?

P:Yes, I try to catch what they want.

Extract 4

Interviewer:Which language does Kamogelo? use when he speaks to the customers?

Participant: He speaks Setswana.

I:Upon arrival, which language did Kamogelo speak to the customers?

P:Kamogelo speaks Ethiopian language but he spoke English to the customers when he first arrived.

Extract 5

Interviewer:Which languages do you speak normally with your customers?

Participant: Sometimes English, Setswana and Afrikaans. Now Ispeak three languages.

I:Which language did you speak to them initially when you got here?

P:English was better.

Extract 6

Interviewer: Which language do you speak to your customers?

Participant: My country is in East Africa.But I try the English language.I know my language.

I:So, ifI come speak Afrikaans to you, will you assist me?

P:Afrikaans -I don't talk but I know the name, what they want.I don't

talk together. I know my problem.

Jokweni(2002:178) argues that “linguistic and cultural barriers perpetuate ethnic divides and political instability, and this in turn hampers economic development in various ways”. In this instance, multilingualism extends beyond being a new linguistic dispensation because it is also a new economic dispensation- it is economically profitable to be able to draw on hybrid linguistic practices.

This type of translanguaging practised by tuckshop owners and customers is equivalent to what Jokweni(2002:185) calls “spontaneous harmonisation”, or maybe more to the point of this research, spontaneous translanguaging harmonisation. According to Jokweni (2002: 185), “spontaneous harmonisation is a natural process which arises when mutually intelligible languages co-exist”. I argue that spontaneous harmonisation is not limited to the harmonisation of languages that share similar orthographies - even languages such as Setswana, Afrikaans and English that do not necessarily share orthographies can spontaneously harmonise through being used in a translingual manner by tuckshop owners and customers.

Spontaneous translanguaging harmonisation in fact is not new to South Africa. In giving an account of multilingualism in pre-colonial South Africa, Makalela(2017:299) relays that “complex communication systems were found between different ethnic groupings in pre-colonial South Africa which suggests that mutual inter-comprehensibility of the languages was used”. Jokweni(2002:187) argues that one advantage of any natural (or grassroots) process of harmonisation or convergence is that “it does not cause conflict of any kind between the speakers”. This lack of linguistic conflict is evident in the tuckshop environment, as speakers creatively make their language harmonise. Jokweni(2002: 177) proposes language harmonisation as a “recourse against the poor linguistic planning and policies of the twentieth century whose aim was to disintegrate and underdevelop Africans”- i.e. linguistic planning strategies that might possibly be the foundation of the disintegrated linguistic perspective implied in the South African Constitution.

Based on the interview extracts quoted above, it becomes apparent how non-South African tuckshop owners have had to learn local languages in order for them to conduct their business transactions. This illustrates how translanguaging and transgressing the fixed boundaries of named languages are critical linguistic practices in modern-day South Africa-a country that is home to a diverse population.

3.3 Tuckshop linguistic practices-an example of Ubuntu translanguaging?

As mentioned in the introduction, Makalela(2013:112) considers that most 'typical' black townships are sites of increased linguistic and cultural contact. Makalela (2017) suggests that individuals in sites that consist of diverse linguistic communities such as tuckshops draw on what he terms 'Ubuntu translanguaging' in order to negotiate the linguistic diversity. Makalela(2017:307) explains that:

While Ubuntu is essentially a philosophy and a way of life for many Africans, its principles of belonging together, discontinuous continuity, and valorising interdependence over independence provide a useful framework to see how African languages cross-pollinate and to offset rigid boundaries between the 11 official languages that are based on oneness ideology.

The direct translation of Ubuntu is 'humanity' and when operationalised, a call for Ubuntu translates to showing humanity towards others and realising that, as the human race, there is more that connects us than what divides us. The following extracts exemplify a sense of Ubuntu translanguaging, as the emphasis is on finding common ground and communication instead of the standardised use of named languages and/or the exclusionary use of a specific language by a specific ethnic/racial group.

Extract 7

Participant: I don't know. I don't talk Setswana or Afrikaans. I hear. But if you want Tswana "mae" [eggs in Setswana], I can give you eggs. But I don't know. I can't talk Afrikaans and Tswana.

Extract 8

Interviewer: So, if a customer comes here and speaks Tswana?

Participant: Bietjie nyana. [a little bit] [laughs]

Extract 9

Interviewer: Which language do you use when purchasing goods from the tuckshop owner?

Participant: I speak any language.

I: And how does the owner respond?

P: The owner responds in English.

Extract 10

Interviewer: Which language do you use when purchasing goods?

Participant: I use Setswana and English now and then.

I: So, if I walk in there now and speak Setswana, would they help me?

P: No, this one doesn't know Setswana that well. The one that speaks Setswana a lot is not here.

Deumert and Mabandla (2009:427) state that “sales in the informal economy can be successfully completed even in cases of low linguistic proficiency-rarely involving more than a basic knowledge of numbers and the names for the products on sale”. Extracts 7 and 8 demonstrate, in particular, how high proficiency in a language is not a priority for communication and/or sense-making. “Bietjie nyana” is a hybridised Afrikaans-Setswana term commonly used in the Northern Cape and it means “Just a little bit”. “Bietjie nyana” is an essential term to know as a tuckshop owner, as these shops are particularly famous for selling certain products in small quantities, such as plastic pouches of sugar (Gastrow and Amit 2013:26). Therefore, if a customer requests “Bietjie nyana atchaar” or “Bietjie nyana butter”, the tuckshop owner will understand the quantity needed. From the interview extracts, it is noticeable how understanding and communication are more important than the use of the standardised and ‘correct’ usage of named languages.

Shohamy (2006: 23) argues that, although language is generally described and understood as “open, personal and dynamic”, policy makers tend to view language “as a closed and finite system, as it is often used as a symbolic tool for the manipulation of political, social, educational and economic agendas”. This view of language results in “language being judged as correct vs. incorrect, grammatical vs. ungrammatical, native vs. non-native, good vs. bad, high vs. low” (Shohamy 2006: 22). Those who conceive language to be a fixed, rule-bound system will classify the spelling of ‘Available’ as ‘Availble’, ‘Fruit’ as ‘Fruei’ and the misspelling of ‘Air-Time’ as errors. However, this study supports Pennycook’s (2010) view that language is a localised practice. Pennycook (2010:1-2) warns against the tendency to juxtapose between global and local uses of languages that mock the notion of locality. In concurring with Pennycook (2010:7) that “all language practices are local”, the language practices evident in Figure 8.3 are best understood as emanating from socio-economic factors related to the tuckshop landscape.

Lanza and Woldemariam (2014) provide an explanation for the supposed ungrammatical use of English by small shop owners as evident in figure 8.4. According to Lanza and Woldemariam (2014:503-504), “in many cases involving smaller shops that employ English on their signs, the owners themselves do not necessarily speak English - the English is necessary for their business, including the English on the sign”. The tuckshop owner could be targeting what Blommaert (2012: 86) refers to as an “oecumenical” audience, appreciating that existing and potential customers are not homogenous - tuckshop customers come from all walks of life. Therefore, the owner draws on an oecumenical lingua franca (Blommaert 2012) which is English - be it ‘standard’ or not. As tuckshop

owners do not cater to a homogenous clientele who use one specific English, the spelling of the English words in figure 8.4 is contextually acceptable as the language is merely used for its commercial power, as implied by Lanza and Woldemariam(2014).

Figure 8.5 is a picture of a tuckshop and/or “restaurant in the village of Kagung in Kuruman-a residential area in which most language practices are conducted in Setswana. As can be seen in Figure 8.5, the English word ‘restaurant’ is spelled incorrectly as ‘restuarant’ on the wall in black and white, yet the word Setswana ‘Ratanang’, which means ‘Love each other’, is consistently spelled correctly on the wall and the red tuckshop sign. Similar to Figure 8.3, in this instance, there is also no interest in reproducing and adhering to ‘standard’ English. In actual fact, the tuckshop owner might not even consider the misspellings as errors - ‘restuarant’, similar to ‘availble’ and ‘air-time’, could be a result of the tuckshop owner drawing on the sound of the words and converting this sound into spelling (Blommaert 2012). Juffermans(2015:67) refers to this type of spelling as an “eye dialect-a type of ‘non-standard spelling’ that is visible to the eye, rather than audible when read out loud”.

Lanza and Woldemariam(2014:504) argue that in ‘peripheral’ communities where the informational content of English is limited, English is drawn on to index “prestige, luxury and modernity”. The evident disinterest in attempting to correct the word ‘restuarant’, either through repainting and/or using the Coca-Cola sign to cover it up, suggests that, in the tuckshop semiotic landscape, English as a named language is considered to be fluid and flexible.

The use of English in Figures 8.3 and 8.5 is better conceptualised as examples of a contestation against the fixity and rule-boundedness of named languages instead of being considered as ‘errors’. The English variations used in Figures 8.3 and 8.5 are not “bad language but language that does not conform to the imagined and invented rules that are maintained in the historical or economic centres of the language” (Juffermans 2015:67). Wei (2011) proposes that “creativity” and “criticality” is essential in the construction of a translanguaging space -the former describes the right to decide to replicate or go against language norms, and the latter involves knowledgeable problematising and questioning existing wisdom. Taking into consideration the decisions of the owners of the businesses pictured in Figures 8.3 and 8.5 to transgress the language rules of English and intentionally only attach importance to English's symbolic associations, the tuckshop environment can be considered a translanguaging space.

Makalela(2017:298-299) argues that Ubuntu translanguaging offers us

the opportunity to “rethink the South African multilingual space to accommodate fluid discursive resources where interdependence is highly valued over independence of language systems”. The interview extracts and figures discussed above exemplify how Ubuntu translanguaging is operationalised in tuckshops where mutual inter-comprehensibility is prioritised above standardised orthographies, separation of named languages and typical conversation rules.

3.4 “I love it when you talk 'foreign'”

This section's heading is appropriated from an advertisement for one of South Africa's popular fast-food establishments, Wimpy. In the advertisement, in a bid to charm his female companion, Henry starts reciting the names of different coffee types to her (creamochino, caffè mocha and macchiato) which he secretly reads from a Wimpy serviette. Upon reciting the name of the last coffee type, i.e. macchiato, the female says: “Ah Henry, I love it when you talk ‘foreign’.” Although humorous, symbolically the advertisement evokes thoughts or curiosity about internationalisation and challenges South Africans to create a society that openly welcomes unfamiliarity. Similar to Wimpy's invitation to South Africans to love ‘foreign’ coffee, the South African Constitution instructs the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) to:

- “(b) promote and ensure respect for—
- (i) all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu; and
 - (ii) Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa”
- (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996:4).

This provision suggests that PANSALB's primary goal is to ensure the mutual respect, use and promotion of all languages used within the South African boundaries. Subsequently, this provision implies that South Africa considers itself a safe and welcoming haven for all its linguistic communities and their members. Yet, regardless of this progressive and inclusive stance towards its diverse linguistic communities, in 2008 xenophobic attacks erupted in the Johannesburg township of Alexandra, eventually spreading throughout the entire Gauteng province and later to Durban and Cape Town. During these xenophobic attacks, linguistic ability/proficiency was used to differentiate between a ‘foreigner’ and a ‘non-foreigner’ as protestors subjected many South Africans to “elbow tests” which encompassed asking potential victims to supply the Zulu word for elbow (Claassen 2017). Tuckshops and other business establishments

owned by non-South African nationals were specifically targeted and as a result, 342 shops were looted and 213 were burnt down.⁷

Driven by their disapproval of the common perspective that violence against Somali tuckshop owners was purely fuelled by xenophobic attitudes in South Africa, Charman and Piper (2012) conducted research in Delft, South Africa, to tease out further plausible reasons for this violence. Delft is an area with a tuckshop market that has experienced a growth in immigrant-run shops and the demise of South African shops. In relation to xenophobic attitudes, Charman and Piper (2012:93) concluded that the majority of the participants interviewed appeared indifferent towards foreign tuckshop owners, with some participants speaking favourably about foreign-owned tuckshops.

The indifferent yet positive and reciprocal relationship between immigrant tuckshop owners and South African customers, as observed by Charman and Piper (2012), was also noticeable in the Northern Cape. The linguistic accommodation practices by customers, as evident in the extracts below, serve as examples of this positive reciprocal relationship:

Extract 11

Interviewer: So which language do you use when purchasing goods from the tuckshop?

Participant: Setswana and English.

I: And when the owner responds? Which language do they use?

P: Setswana and English. They don't know it well [Setswana] so we use English a lot.

Extract 12

Interviewer: So which language do you use when you come to purchase goods?

Participant: I speak English mostly.

I: So what happens when you speak Afrikaans?

P: He understands Afrikaans here and there but most of the time he doesn't.

I: When you speak Afrikaans to him, in which language does he respond?

When you go to buy something? P: In English.

Extract 13

Interviewer: Which language do you speak to your customers?

Participant: More English and then a little bit of Tswana and a little bit Afrikaans.

I: Which language did you first speak with the customers when you got here?

P: English. If the customers don't know English, then it is a little bit of Tswana.

The misguided assumption by the xenophobic protestors that language proficiency serves as an uncontested indication of ethnicity and nationality shows how the national government and PANSALB neglected to ensure respect for all the linguistic communities within South Africa. Makoni (2003:139) argues that the South African Constitution implicitly promotes plural monolingualism: "... a variant and an extension of monolingualism. Instead of South Africans being encouraged to be multilingual, the policy could actually end up making each citizen merely competent in her/his own language." The Constitution's promotion of plural monolingualism (as suggested by Makoni) is not reflective nor consistent with South Africa's current sociolinguistic practices—South Africa is a melting pot of languages and cultures which renders knowing pluralised monolingualism impractical and probably non-existent at a societal level.

Ten years after xenophobic attacks were incentivised through language, Extracts 1 to 4 serve as indications of how South Africans and non-South Africans transcend this 'one language equals one ethnicity' mentality perpetuated by the South African Constitution. Through using a translingual blend of Setswana, Afrikaans and English, customers and tuckshop owners illustrate respect for all languages and language users without apparent intervention from the government or PANSALB.

This does not mean that there is no tension between South Africans and non-South African tuckshop owners, as it has become the norm to loot tuckshops during protests, as was the case in 2018 in Kimberley, the Northern Cape's capital city. However, I put forth that these tensions are mostly political, i.e. related to the lack of service delivery from local government, and unfortunately looting is used as a conduit to illustrate frustration. Linguistically, customers and owners are accommodative of each other and strategies such as the 'elbow test' ideology would be less 'effective' due to the now normalised change in tuckshop ownership and, as is evident above, non-South African tuckshop owners' use of translanguaging practices.

Jokweni (2002:178) argues that "colonial policies in Africa as a whole and apartheid policies in South Africa were never intended to support what would later benefit the Africans in Africa". Although the South African Constitution continues to be plagued with outdated and non-African perspectives of language, it is arguable that the translocal linguistic hybridity employed by tuckshop owners and customers is illustrative of a pre-colonial South African manner of being which was "endowed with Ubuntu, which encouraged cohabitation and interdependence between people of different tribes and their languages" (Makalela 2017:300).

4. Concluding remarks and implications

This chapter aimed to illustrate how the disjuncture between the written national language policy, as captured in the South African Constitution, and the de facto language policy of a translanguaging space, such as the tuckshop linguistic/semiotic landscape of the Northern Cape, challenges the epistemological perspectives of language in the South African Constitution. The tuckshop's linguistic landscape was selected as an ideal case study considering its evolving ownership, purpose and clientele. In sheer contradiction to the written language policy of South Africa, the tuckshop linguistic landscape creates a de facto language policy that not only challenges the written policy, but also exposes the weaknesses in a Constitution celebrated as one of the most liberal and progressive in the world. Specifically, the linguistic/semiotic landscape of the Northern Cape tuckshops creates a de facto language policy that challenges the South African Constitution's perspectives on: (1) language as an indicator of racial/ethnic identity; (2) languages as boxed and fixed objects; and (3) plural monolingualism as a societal norm (instead of Ubuntu translanguaging).

Through 'mismatched' commercial signage and translingual spoken economic transactions, the linguistic landscape of tuckshops challenges the '11 languages equals 11 ethnic groups' notion perpetuated by the South African Constitution. Tuckshop customers and owners draw on their entire linguistic repertoire during interactions, particularly to conduct economic transactions. Tuckshops have partially aided in the disassociation between language and ethnic groups in society, particularly since language can be used for exclusion/inclusion purposes. Tuckshops cater to a diverse clientele who bring their own socio-linguistic history and, therefore, language practices in this semiotic landscape are creative and constantly fluctuate as the clientele and ownership fluctuate. There is minimal adherence to 'standard' languages - in spoken form (evident also in the variations of English that tuckshop owners speak) and written form (on signage, price lists, etc.).

This chapter contributes to the body of existing work on translanguaging outside of the classroom/educational setting. The findings that result from this work simultaneously prompt new conversations and/or reinvigorate existing ones. The existence of a de facto language policy that is borne from translanguaging spaces, such as the linguistic landscape of the tuckshop, necessitates a critical review of South Africa's national language policy and its problematic epistemological assumption that language is an automatic ethnic identity marker. The increased use of translanguaging practices and mutual inter-comprehensibility between different languages calls for a reassessment of the arbitrary separation of languages (as separated by

former colonial administrators and missionaries) and for solutions such as Ubuntu translanguaging and the harmonisation of mutually intelligible languages. Harmonising the orthographies of such languages (as done by the Centre of Advanced Studies of African Societies, CASAS) will not merely provide us with orthographies that can be used transnationally among African countries, but it will also symbolically break down these imagined boundaries and enhance unity among Africans.